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ABSTRACT

The inner city child is described, and the differences between his school and that of his middle-class counterpart are contrasted. The author lists what he has frequently found to be affective constraints of recalcitrant inner city students: (1) poor school attitudes; (2) anti-societal (middle class) values; and (3) negative school perceptions. The difficulties encountered by teachers in inner city classrooms, as well as the obvious inefficacy of usual counselor and psychologist strategies, are emphasized. It is suggested that the counselor needs to take his skills out of his office into the classroom arena. The author describes an exchange, based on some of Neil Postman's ideas, in which he, a college professor and consultant, and a female 4th grade teacher switched roles. The gains which each realized are summarized. (TL)

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The Inner City Classroom: Affective Domain Constraints

A Paper Presented to the

Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association Convention

by

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Introduction

The "Inner City Child" is a serious challenge to educators, counsellors, school psychologists and even parents. Perhaps some of us wonder who we mean when we talk about an inner city child or student. For purposes of this paper, I consider an inner city child to be one who goes to school in a rather depressed building in a more or less deprived neighborhood usually located well within the city limits of a city of perhaps forty or fifty thousand people and up to a million or more. The central feature is frequently a lowered socio-economic base which permeates or categorizes the neighborhood and the school. This is not to say that these same kinds of children in the inner-city school are not to be found in rural or outlying areas. Many of the rural schools, especially in economically hard-pressed areas, are quite similar to the inner-city prototypes where we find run-down buildings, poor facilities and equipment, low aspiration levels of both students and teachers, and a general state of chronic apathy and depression in the school or perhaps utter chaos in terms of classroom management.

Of course, from our view as guidance counsellors and school psychologists, a neighborhood has a very definite influence on the kinds of problems we will be dealing with as we go about our everyday professional activities. If the children and families are primarily middle or upper class than we will probably gear ourselves to career and academic concerns growing out of carrying on a tradition of business or professional or technical status of parents, or at least a desire for the students to be up-graded through college and university attendance. We are busy talking

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about grades, streaming, college entrance, and career decision making. On the other hand, if we are in a distinctly lower class environment we note that the students are living a day to day existence, concerned about breakfast, maybe some kind of lunch, and a dinner, of sorts ... and such things as clothes, jobs, a car, or transistor radio, a personal TV, or early marriage ... and breaking loose from home.

So we see there is distinctly a difference in the general focus of the kind of problems which seem to loom as important for us to tackle ... that is, if we address ourselves to what the students consider to be their needs and concerns.

As a teacher in a university setting where the main thrust is teacher training and preparation of guidance personnel, I find myself searching around for more important avenues of making my own work more meaningful and more in tune with current needs in the schools. Fortunately, my own professional activities take me into the schools at both the elementary and secondary levels ... in the capacity as a psychological consultant. Sometimes, I am bothered by the sight of counsellors and school psychologists who stay inside their little cubicles isolating themselves from the mainstream of the school ... the classroom. If a counsellor or school psychologist listens to his fellow teachers in a school and really interacts with them he will soon get the message that teachers are more and more "in trouble" if they try seriously to see their students as individuals. This fact is especially true in the inner-city school. However, before we get too far let it not be the unintended impression that the inner-city school is the only one with problems. Let it not be implied that middle class and upper class children are not in need of special

.3.

services and the understanding of a humanistic approach to their personal difficulties. But, my particular interest is in the inner-school because I am very much afraid such schools do not have the personnel, the vested interests in the community to make sure they will get the services they need like adequate counselling, school nursing (health) service, academic remedial work, interested and capable teachers, sympathetic principals, and curriculum specialists, etc.

Cognitive-Affective Challenges

Rather recently I have been working on what I call a Cognitive-Affective Interaction Model. In this conception the idea, rather simply is to postulate the importance of affective concerns such as students' attitudes, interests and values. In the inner-city it is not at all uncommon to find that recalcitrant students frequently are overly-endowed with poor school attitudes, rather anti-societal (middle-class) values, and negative school perceptions. These students are turned almost completely off by grades four, five or six, unless someone, or some program shows them a need or reason that meaningfully is a compelling force to continue. But the affective constraints are almost too much for the average inner-city teacher to deal with. Why this is true relates to the paucity of specialized services in such under-staffed, under-imaginative, under-privileged "learning prisons." Unfortunately, we counsellors and psychologists are unaware of these conditions existing in such ubiquitous proportions because we are not getting more into classrooms, but

COUNSELLING IN THE INNER CITY

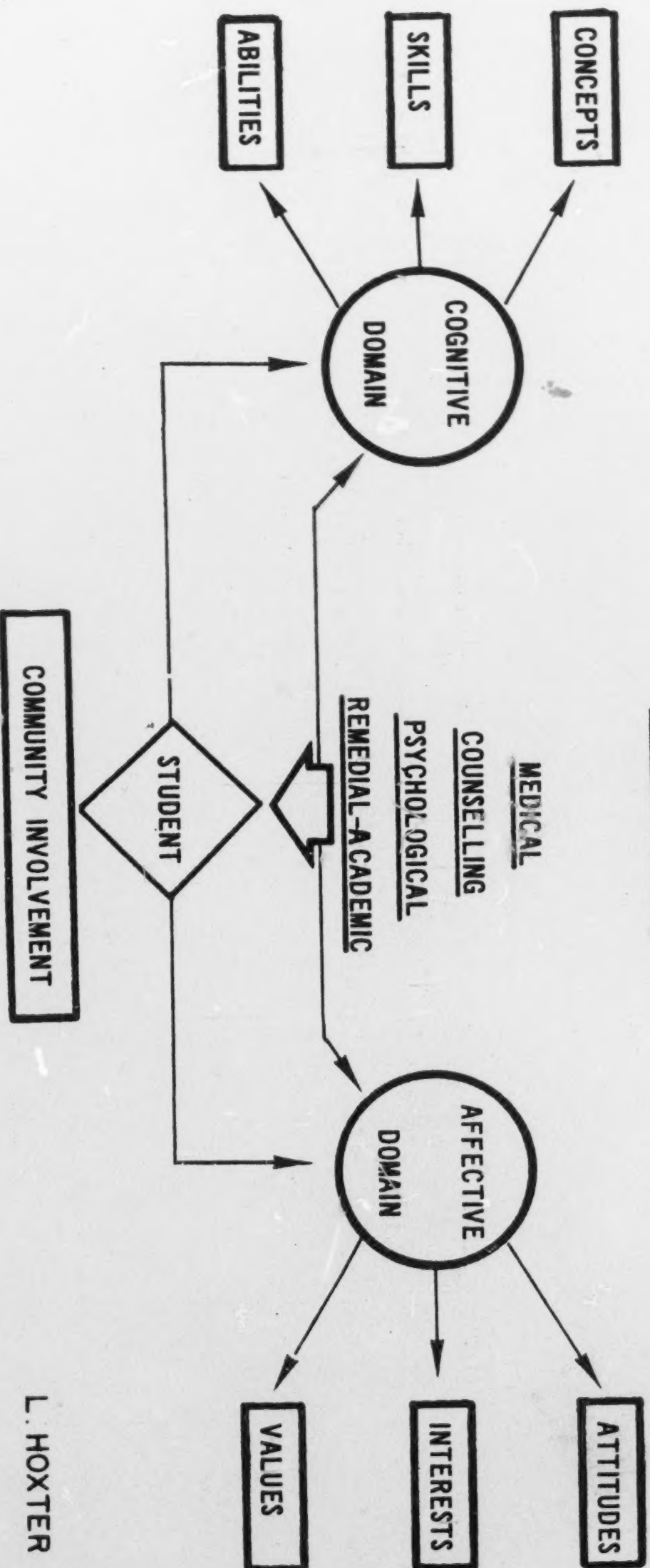
SPECIAL SERVICES

MEDICAL

COUNSELLING

PSYCHOLOGICAL

REMEDIAL-A CADEMIC



L. HOXTER

instead we are seeing children one by one or in single guidance classes. We are failing to take our skills and understanding into the arena. We are losing touch with the behavioral manifestations of the learning process.

The Postman Model

Quite accidentally I discovered an idea which a colleague of mine and I labelled the Postman Model. Perhaps more accurately it should be called the Postman-Weingartner Model because the idea came from Postman and Weingartner's (1968) book entitled, "Teaching as a Subversive Activity." Neil Postman came to our college as a speaker for our teacher trainees. In addition to really shaking up the staff and students because of his very radical ideas, Postman emphasized a few ideas from a chapter called, "New Teachers". His point was to present some suggestions for teachers. Rather briefly some of the ideas were to:

1. Declare a five-year moratorium on the use of all textbooks.
2. Have "English" teachers "teach" Math, Math teachers teach English, Social Studies teachers teach Science, Science teachers Art, and so on.
3. Transfer all the elementary school teachers to high school and vice-versa.
4. Require every teacher who thinks he knows his "subject" well to write a book on it.
5. Dissolve all "subjects", "courses", and especially course requirements.

.5.

6. Limit each teacher to three declarative sentences per class and 15 interrogatives.
7. Prohibit teachers from asking any questions they already know the answers to.
8. Declare a moratorium on all tests and grades.
9. Require all teachers to undergo some form of psychotherapy as part of their in-service training.
10. Classify teachers according to their ability and make lists public.
11. Require all teachers to take a test prepared by students on what the students know.
12. Make every class an election and withhold a teacher's monthly check if his students do not show any interest in going to next month's classes.
13. Require every teacher to take a one year leave of absence every fourth year to work in some "field" other than education.

It may not surprise you to know that our student trainees and our staff were filled with very mixed emotions about some of these radical ideas. In my opinion, Postman is trying to get educators into real life situations approximately simulating the kind of feeling a student has walking into a class where he feels he will not succeed, or cannot succeed. And here I refer to the business of having a person teach a subject for which he has not been trained. This one item, which is number two in the list struck me as one I wanted to play around with. My reasoning went along these lines. As teachers, and counsellors, we fail to know what our students are "feeling" in their day to day life experiences. We are the experts, the all knowing ones, the insulated, well-situated professionals who tell others how to react, how to cope --

but, many times don't have the transfer of emotion necessary to feel with our clients, or our troubled student. We have forgotten what it was like.

It also became apparent to me that as a university teacher, and a counsellor, and school psychologist that I had lost touch with the dynamics of the classroom at the elementary and secondary level. Sure we read journal articles, and scan research studies. We accept referrals all the time. And then, we sit down very comfortably in the counsellor's office or in a testing room and proceed to diagnose, treat, and cure. But what about the real arena? What about finding out what the student is talking about in his unbearable class? What about Miss Smith's referrals of students who are "just impossible" to manage? Could we do it? Is she (the teacher) simply reflecting her own frustrations, or could it be that classrooms, some of them, are really becoming more difficult to cope with?

The Exchange

I was able to exchange classes with an elementary teacher, Jo Arne Campbell, who has a grade four class in a depressed neighborhood of Kingston. We took up Postman's challenge and it seems that there were some benefits. Each of us taught a unit (several hours) at a level that was "out of sight" in terms of our formal training. I was not ever an elementary school teacher and Jo Anne was not trained formally to teach a university course in Educational Psychology. But it seems that the kinds of gains can be summarized:

From University to Elementary

1. A step down to the real world of children and their interests, enthusiasms, problems, and zestful spontaneity.
2. A real-hard look at the press of teaching deprived, underprivileged students whose affective needs go far beyond the resources of any teacher.
3. A reawakening of the appreciation of managerial skills required of an elementary teacher.
4. The gruesome and awesome task of meeting the needs of 35 people instead of one (such as in counseling and school psychology).
5. The powerlessness felt in not being able to allow students "freedom" to explore, to be "out of step", to do something different from the group ... the feeling of being a dictator to preserve group cohesion and a semblance of classroom management.
6. Restoration of a sense of urgency for increased attention to better facilities, programs, personnel and specialized services for the inner-city school.

From Elementary to University

1. A chance to "tell it like it is" to future teachers who want the "facts -- unvarnished."
2. A chance to relax and think through some basic issues of teaching in a more "reflective", "serene," environment where students "hold still," "listen," and demonstrate on the spot appreciation for honesty, frankness, and sincerity.



3. A rest from the arena ... is this still teaching?
No fights! No sulking! No tantrums!
4. A chance to re-examine educational theories and
practices from a different perspective ... some
intellectual and professional enrichment.

.9.

5. Talking and exchanging views with instructors and students ... a higher level of feed-back ... restoration of adult-level stimulation.
6. Opportunity for consultation with resource people, from curriculum areas, educational technology, and the foundations areas.

Implications

Counselling particularly, and the helping services generally, ought to re-examine their roles in the inner-city schools. Especially in times of financial fat-trimming we must be careful not to be considered expendable, or just a frill outside of the mainstream of the teaching-learning process. With all of the affective constraints of the inner-city school, school counsellors and school psychologists have to close ranks with teachers and provide for an all out attack on the alienation, apathy, and hostility found in so many inner-city school children. It is not enough simply to deal with diagnosis and treatment of single cases. What we have to begin doing is showing our accountability by becoming more involved in the teaching-learning process as behavioral scientists. We must assist in planning affective curriculums, infiltrate the classrooms with group dynamics techniques and affective, humane approaches which will lead to better interpersonal relationships of up-tight students and weary over burdened teachers. Arrange to bring the community (parents, relatives, etc.) right into the schools. Radical approaches to a more humane integration of cognitive-affective activities ought to be tried. Administrators are desperately in need of confrontation with well trained counsellors and psychologists who are not afraid to help students and teachers in the halls, in the yards, in the offices, and, most of all in the classrooms.

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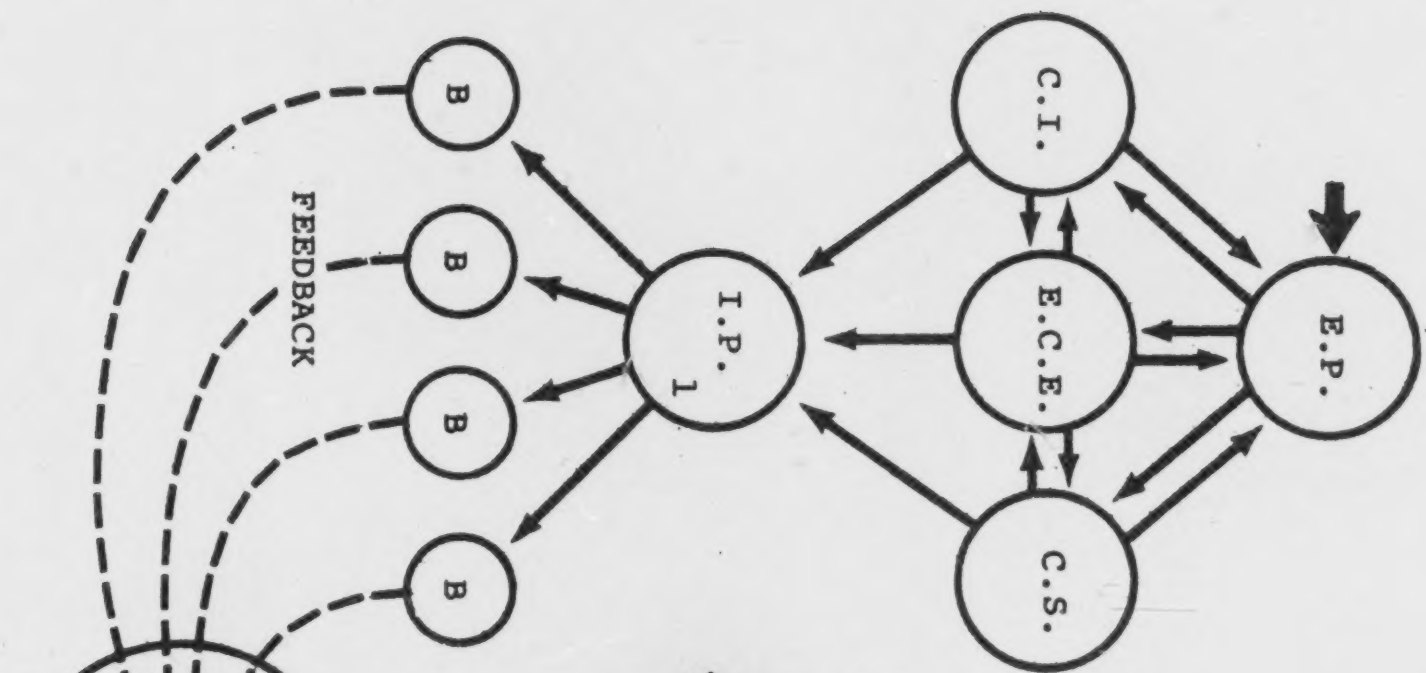
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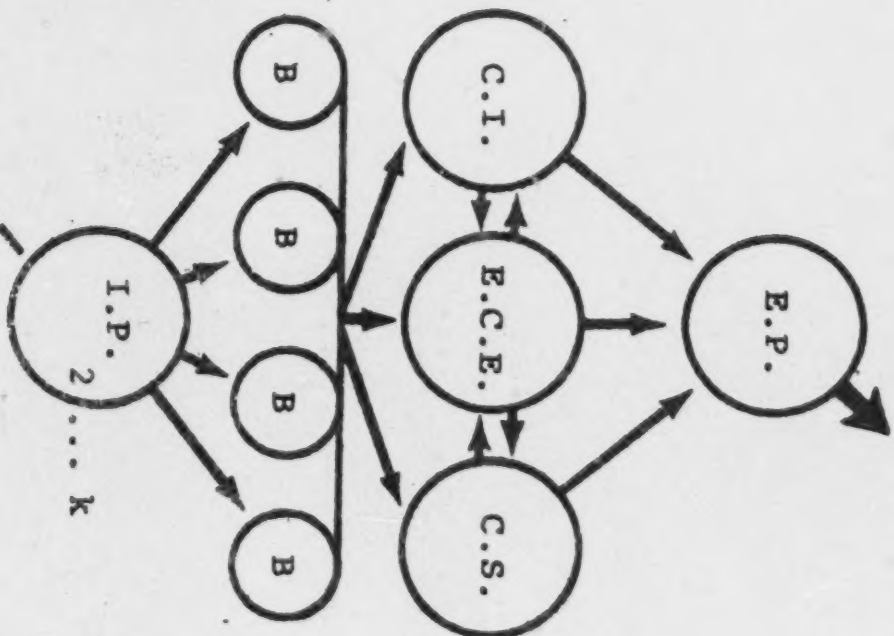
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HOXTER COGNITIVE-AFFECTIVE

INTERACTION MODEL



CONTINUING PROCESS



LEGEND

- E.P. = EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY
- C.I. = CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION
- E.C.E. = EXTRA-CURRICULA EXPERIENCES
- C.S. = CLINICAL SERVICES
- I.P. = INFORMATION PROCESSING
- B = RESPONDENT EDUCATIONAL BEHAVIOR